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AUTHOR	Bourland, Eric
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ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue addresses the issue of violence prevention in American schools and is based on presentations and discussions at the Workgroup To Improve the Quality of Technical Assistance around the Topic of Violence Prevention held in Washington, D.C. on June 12-14, 1995. The newsletter reports on the following presentation topics: (1) the origins of violence, prevention strategies, and the need to involve parents and communities; (2) the organization of western states by the Western Regional Resource Center to deliver effective interventions to students with severe emotional disturbances (SED) and train teachers of SED students; (3) research at Johns Hopkins University (Maryland) on the need for partnerships of schools, families, and communities for violence prevention; (4) a Delaware alternative program for disruptive students which emphasizes parent/family involvement; (5) the high priority of the violence issue by state directors of special education; (6) discussions by workgroups on ways to evaluate technical assistance activities, communicate with states, mobilize constituents, request funding, and build networks; and (7) development of a plan by Regional Resource Centers to involve local, state, and national education systems in a national violence prevention technical assistance activity. Some additional information provided in the newsletter includes a message from the Director of the Federal Resource Center for Special Education, facts about antisocial behavior, questions to ask about change strategies, facts about SED, and components of successful violence prevention methods. Contains 23 references. (DB)

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[Violence Prevention: A Topical Newsletter.]
Bourland, Eric

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The Federal Resource Center for Special Education

RRFC LINKS

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Dr. John Reid discusses origins of violence, prevention strategies, need to involve parents and communities

Violence is a growing problem in American schools. More than ever, parents, educators, students, administrators, and policymakers need accurate information about violence—about the circumstances in homes and schools that are conducive to violence, and about effective strategies to intervene with violent youngsters. Research has shown that the most cost-effective and successful intervention strategy is *prevention*. No matter what role they occupy—researcher, educator, social services provider, or parent—people who deal with behavioral problems in youngsters should know that it is both very easy, and critically important, to identify situations in homes and schools that lead to violent behavior, and to intervene in these situations *before* violent behavior becomes evident.

We have extensive data about violence, according to Dr. John Reid, clinical psychologist and executive director of the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene, Oregon. Speaking to the Workgroup, he said, "We know about the circumstances in homes and schools that lead to violent behavior, which interventions are successful in deterring violence, and which interventions don't work very well at all."

(see "Reid," page 2)

WRRC organizes western states to deliver effective interventions to SED students, train SED teachers

Dr. Richard Zeller tells Workgroup about regional technical assistance activity

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In 1994 alone, three states in the western region asked the Western Regional Resource Center (WRRC) for assistance in intervening with students who have Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED). In recent years, other states in the region have requested similar assistance. How do we work with these extremely disturbed young people? the states asked. How do we train teachers to work with them?

"There are not any good answers to these questions," Dr. Richard Zeller, Director of WRRC, told the Workgroup. "There is very little literature that applies directly to SED, there are few resources to support professionals, and there are no program models for intervening with SED students. It's difficult to work with this population, and it's difficult to convince personnel to commit themselves to working with them. The turnover rate for SED teachers is extremely high. When the states made their requests, we didn't have a good solution to offer them."

To begin to deal with the many problems associated with SED interventions, WRRC staff have organized state education

(see "Zeller," page 11)

A message from the Director of the FRC

The *Workgroup to Improve the Quality of Technical Assistance Around the Topic of Violence Prevention*, held 12–14 June 1995 in Washington, DC, at the Academy for Educational Development, was the culmination of a year of planning by the FRC, the RRCs, the Office of Special Education Programs, and other agencies and projects. It was intended to be a follow-up meeting to the *Meeting of the Expert Panel on Issues and Trends in Special Education*, sponsored by the FRC on 28–30 July 1994. I believe both meetings yielded valuable results, due to the excellent work of the participants. During the Expert Panel meeting, a group of experienced educators identified seven critical issues in special education, one of which was violence. Given the rapid growth of violence into a topic of national concern, the FRC chose violence prevention as the issue that would ground discussion at the Workgroup meeting. The meeting brought together the six RRCs and other OSEP funded TA projects, along with experts in the fields of violence prevention and systemic change—all of whom contributed immeasureably to the meeting. I know that I personally learned a great deal from the colleagues and other professionals who attended.

I thank each of you who attended, and helped plan, the Workgroup meeting. I want to give special thanks to Marie Roane of OSEP for her support. As always, your dedication is appreciated by everyone who is working to improve outcomes for students who have disabilities.

—Carol Valdivieso
Director, FRC

Reid

(from page 1)

Legislators, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders are engaged in an ongoing debate about whether to commit precious resources to violence prevention programs, or to deal with the more graphic problem of youngsters who already manifest violent behavior. In fact, the view of many professionals who deal with violent youngsters is that prevention programs, more so than punitive measures, are the most beneficial and cost-effective way of treating the youngsters. "This is the feeling they get in the juvenile corrections field—it would be wonderful to do prevention," said Reid. "But we've got all these kids fighting and hurting each other in the halls, so should we waste our time on these little tykes that aren't doing anybody any harm?"

"They're the ones who tear up our classrooms, who make our lives miserable, they're the kids that other kids hate, they're the kids that teachers, and very often the parents and the siblings, don't like so much either. So we're talking about a youngster that doesn't just have a disorder, but a kid who is actively in combat with his environment."

The answer is *Yes*. During his presentation, Reid repeatedly made the point that it is more pragmatic to use early intervention to prevent violence, rather than establishing legislation to punish and detain youngsters *after* they commit violent acts.

Reid said, "When we started doing some systematic research on the development of aggression and violence, in the late seventies, the wisdom at that point was that serious aggressiveness started at around the age of ten years old. We began our longitudinal studies of kids beginning in the fourth grade. Then studies began coming out that suggested we should have begun our studies when the kids were eight years old." Studies since then have been even more compelling. "If we were going to begin our studies today, we would start at eighteen months. Many people would argue earlier."

How youth become violent and delinquent

Many factors influence the beginning of violent and delinquent behaviors. A developmental pattern, "a way of dealing with other people, a way of doing business with the environment," including interactions with family, teachers, and other kids, contributes to the development of delinquency and violence. "Nobody who deals with the delinquent or aggressive child in a meaningful way is a passive participant in the development of delinquency and violence in the child," said Reid. He remarked on the manner in which a youngster's daily living conditions can foster violent and delinquent behaviors. "It's difficult for anyone to regard these kids objectively," he said. "They're the ones who tear up our classrooms, who make our lives miserable, they're the kids that other kids hate, they're the kids

(see "Reid," page 5)

"If interventions are going to succeed, they must be based on partnerships of schools, families, and communities"

Johns Hopkins researchers discuss partnerships in violence prevention

Public schools are increasingly troubled by aggression and misconduct among their students, and traditional methods of deterring aggression and misconduct in schools have been largely unsuccessful, according to Drs. Lisa Werthamer-Larsson and Nick Ialongo, researchers from the School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. If interventions to deter aggression and misconduct are to succeed, they said, the interventions must be built around partnerships between parents, schools, and communities.

Drs. Werthamer-Larsson and Ialongo came to the Workgroup meeting armed with extensive research statistics on violence, to report on a violence intervention strategy they implemented in a Baltimore public school district—a successful intervention, unlike many, because it combined a behavioral classroom approach with an approach that built a partnership between schools and parents.

Just to demonstrate what educators and policymakers are up against, the researchers began their presentation by reporting some facts about violence in America's schools. According to a National Crime Survey conducted by the US Department of Justice in 1991:

- Nearly three million index crimes occur on or near school campuses every year.
- School crimes are becoming more serious, and incidences of assault, possession of weapons, and murder are rising.
- Children of younger and younger ages are committing serious crimes.

According to a National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1991), a Texas A&M University School Violence Survey (1991), the State of Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Survey (1990), and a United Federation of Teachers survey (1990):

(see "Johns Hopkins," page 4)

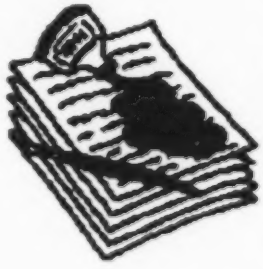
Delaware program emphasizes parent, family involvement

Woodruff discusses alternative program for disruptive students

Disruptive behavior in schools is a growing national problem, according to Valerie Woodruff, Associate State Superintendent of the Delaware Department of Public Instruction—a problem her state is tackling directly. Delaware has adopted a program to intervene with its disruptive students, a program remarkable for the fact that it involves not only the students, but also the adults who interact with the students. While showing early signs of being successful, the program did not come about easily, nor will sustaining it during a time of financial restructuring be an easy task. Woodruff, speaking to the Workgroup, discussed strategies that state education agencies can use to develop successful intervention programs for disruptive youths, and addressed the growing need for states to fund these programs.

An alternative program

In 1993, Delaware established an alternative school program in three Delaware counties to provide school instruction to students who had been expelled from school or who were near to being expelled. "The program has worked very well," Woodruff said. "It has resulted in kids getting services who otherwise would be out on the streets."



The alternative program places a "strong, strong emphasis on parent and family involvement," she said. "I have impatience with people who want to fix kids without considering how we as adults have contributed to the environment in which kids live. Public school students live with us (educators, parents) for significant parts of their day. When we deal with disruptive behaviors, we should consider not only what children bring with them into the classroom, but also what we bring with us. We have to start thinking differently about who kids relate to." The program

(see "Delaware," page 12)

Johns Hopkins

(from page 3)

- Twenty-five percent of students reported carrying a weapon to school in the 30 days preceding the survey.
- Thirty-five to forty percent reported being threatened with physical harm by other students during the 30 days preceding the survey.
- Twenty-five percent of students were involved in fights at school during this same time.
- Forty-four percent of students reported that their school was either less safe, or as *un*safe, as the neighborhood in which it was located.
- Students were at greater risk for assault in the school itself, rather than in the environment through which they traversed going to and from school and in the adjacent neighborhood.
- Twenty-nine percent of teachers reported that they had seriously considered leaving their teaching careers because of school violence.

Drs. Ialongo and Werthamer-Larsson have shown that the most effective interventions in schools have two features common to their design: they are based in research, and they require active involvement from stakeholders from the school, the community, and the family. During the 1993–1994 school year, the researchers began an intervention with just such a design, establishing a partnership with the Baltimore public school system with the goal of directly involving parents in the education of their children. The program, implemented in first grade classrooms, is one of the first to seek to improve educational outcomes by intervening in the family environment as a student is beginning her or his education.

"We were both very interested in involving parents," said Dr. Ialongo. "A lot of times, parents and families are left out of interventions, to the detriment of students. Obviously, families make a large contribution to kids' development. Why exclude them?"

The design of the intervention used two approaches: a classroom approach, designed by Dr. Werthamer-Larsson, and a family-school partnership approach, designed by Dr. Ialongo. The approaches were parallel, said Dr. Ialongo, and both had the objective of improving school achievement and reducing aggressive and shy behavior.

"A lot of times, parents and families are left out of interventions, to the detriment of students. Obviously, families make a large contribution to kids' development. Why exclude them?"

The researchers went to nine elementary schools and chose three first grade classrooms from each. Each classroom was randomly assigned to one of the two approaches, or to a control group which received no intervention. Six hundred seventy children participated, along with their families, representing 97% of the total population of first grade classes in the nine schools. "The goal," said Dr. Ialongo, "was to reduce psychological distress among the students, and improve self-esteem, psychological well being, and academic achievement. The long term objectives, as the students continue into adolescence and adulthood, are to promote good mental health and success in school and the workplace."

Dr. Werthamer-Larsson's School-Based Approach

Dr. Werthamer-Larsson's approach was to work in classrooms to reduce aggressive behaviors and mitigate withdrawn behaviors. She used a method called the Good Behavior Game, a school-based behavioral strategy developed by the Johns Hopkins team. The Good Behavior Game was an actual game that students played as an accompaniment to classwork.

As a prelude to her presentation on her school-based intervention, Dr. Werthamer-Larsson talked about the importance of evaluating violence prevention interventions. "It's very important in violence prevention work to evaluate the results of interventions, and look at who it works for and who it doesn't work for, and what else we need to do. It's imperative that we take a step back from programs and ask critically, Is this program helping with the children I'm working with? What's the evidence?" She cautioned against a simplistic approach to evaluation. "You can't just say, Does this program work, yes or no—but, Who does it work for, and Who does it not work for? What more do we need to do?"

(see "Johns Hopkins," page 7)

Reid

(from page 2)

that teachers, and very often the parents and the siblings, don't like so much either. So we're talking about a youngster that doesn't just have a disorder, but a kid who is actively in combat with his environment."

Reid reported that an extensive and recent study, which analyzed the results of several hundred *other* studies, showed that the strongest predictors of chronic delinquency and violence occur when kids are quite young. "The predictive nature of these variables is *very* strong," said Reid. He identified the two strongest predictors of delinquency and violence:

- *Discipline.* The most robust predictor was the manner in which the youngster is managed by the parents, including discipline. "Ineffective, harsh, abusive, emotional discipline has been identified in study after study as related" to later aggressive tendencies, said Reid.
- *Lack of supervision.* "If we're talking about serious violence and delinquency later on, it's the supervision that probably is the key."

Both of these parenting skills—discipline and supervision—can be changed, said Reid. "We can in fact teach parents to use more sane and effective discipline, and we can also teach them to supervise their youngsters in a better way."

What works

Early intervention programs that teach discipline and supervision skills to parents are particularly effective, stopping delinquent and violent behaviors before they are ingrained in a child. Reid emphasized again that "it's crucial to intervene early. Kids who are troublesome early tend to be troublesome later. In cases of delinquency and antisocial behavior, the developmental stability—for troublesomeness—is absolutely incredible."

One component of early intervention is teaching effective parenting skills, including:

- Setting up clear, reasonable, and age-appropriate expectations for a child.
- Using positive and consistent discipline techniques.
- Supervising the child, including knowing the child's whereabouts.

Developing effective interventions is not an easy proposition, because so many factors contribute to delinquent and violent behavior. Interventions must occur at every level of a child's environment: home, school, and community. "One of the things we should consider," said Reid, " is that aggression cannot occur by itself, and effective interventions will require system changes," or changes that are implemented in consideration of every level of a student's environment including the family and the classroom, and of the practices of local, state, and federal agencies.

Teaching supervisory skills

An effective intervention practice is to teach parents to establish orderly, consistent guidelines for youngsters, and to use consistent positive reinforcement for positive behaviors. When they are raised according to arbitrary, incidental, or abusive guidelines, said Reid, "Kids get twitchy. Any kid can be violent—how would we fight a war if we did not capitalize on this fact?—but if we don't think about how we teach kids how to deal with aggression and conflict, the kids are going to have problems."

Supervising youngsters is very important in preventing delinquent behavior, especially monitoring the crowd with whom a youngster consorts. A recent longitudinal study followed 200 kids from fourth grade to age twenty-two, and investigated the peers with whom these kids associated. Some kids had no delinquents among their friends, while others knew *only* delinquents. Kids who had many delinquent friends, and who went about unsupervised, were arrested quite frequently. Crime, delinquency, and violence are social activities, and kids spur each other on to delinquency. Eighty-five percent of juvenile crimes are committed in groups of two or more. Peer groups, however, are the most difficult groups in which to intervene.

"Kids need to be taught how to deal with other kids," said Reid. "Kids need mentoring from adults. One impediment to mentoring is the problem of teenagers becoming parents before they can truly be said to be adults. The trouble is, there are fewer and fewer adults to

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Reid

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give mentoring," which demonstrates, he said, that children need supervision *at least* until they learn to be effective supervisors themselves.

Supervision means more than simply posting rules or establishing stern, punitive legislation. "Delinquent kids are devious," said Reid. "Their business is getting around rules." Supervision means that parents must become actively involved in preventing delinquent and violent behaviors. "I think the real key to prevention is to structure our resources. We need to get parents, families, and communities involved in education."

"I think the real key to prevention is to structure our resources. We need to get parents, families, and communities involved in education."

Teaching appropriate discipline skills

Using appropriate disciplinary measures is very important in preventing delinquent behavior. Many youngsters who become violent or delinquent come from homes in which they are subject to harshly physical disciplinary measures. "Some people think about child abuse as crazed parents who attack their children—and I'm sure some of them are—but what you usually see if you study abusive families is that child abuse almost always happens in the context of a *lot* of physical discipline," said Reid. In the case of an aggressive youngster, "It's not necessarily that we have this really *mean* individual, but rather a person who tends to handle their relations with others in a physical way—and they do it a lot. They also tend to be people who make other people mad at them. And so you get a high degree of tension within a family." Youngsters who commit many offenses, and who live in such a family, are specially subject to physical abuse and to learning aggressive patterns of behavior.

What doesn't work

Two violence intervention practices that are of little value, according to Reid, are personal therapy and group interventions.

Regarding personal therapy, Reid said, "There have been many, many, many studies of various kinds of interventions with these kids. The ones that never work are the personal interventions, individual psychotherapy, play therapy, self-concept development—they sound like great ideas but they're just not powerful enough to change the course of the kind of violent behavior that we're here to talk about."

Regarding group treatments, he said, "Is it a good idea to get all these bad kids and put them together?" There are many kinds of group treatments, including groups for substance use and social skills training. While it is possible to teach social skills to delinquent and violent youngsters, the effects of this training prove to be limited when the youngster reenters the environment outside the training class. Often the youngster's peers will provoke him back into aggressive behavior. "Don't get me wrong, social skills training is *great*," said Reid, "but don't target just the kid. You have to teach both the teachers and the other kids to support and relate to the social skills training. The training must be applied to all levels of the interactional structure." That is, all elements of the *system* of the youngster's environment must be included in the intervention.

More evidence

Reid offered additional evidence for the value of early intervention. "Kids who get off to an early start are the ones who commit the most crimes," he said. Serious delinquents, he said, self-report up to 200 crimes per year. "They're busy little beavers." Many youngsters exhibit aggressive and delinquent tendencies at age nine or even earlier, and these children are very likely to engage in criminal and violent behavior for the rest of their lives. "The early starters are the real ne'er-do-wells," said Reid. "Early starting is a big-time risk factor. You want to get these kids when they first begin."

Increasingly, youngsters are committing homicide. "Historically, people of ages 20–25 commit the most homicides. Lately, kids of ages 15–17 do more of the killing. We're getting kids who are more and more violent, at younger and younger ages." Even as the incidence of homicide increases, most states do not have early intervention programs in place.

"Many courts will not do much at all until the youngster accumulates five contacts with the cops," said Reid. "They're saying, wait a minute, we have to spend our resources on the real hard cases, so we'll just give warnings. So the courts will let youngsters accumulate five offenses before they take any action. This is exactly backwards. This is not

giving them chances, it's really paving their way to a delinquent lifestyle."

Knowing who will be violent and delinquent

According to Reid, often teachers can accurately predict which students will be violent. A school district in Reid's home state of Oregon uses a seven-item teacher screening device, with which teachers can evaluate a whole class in one-half hour, dividing the students into three risk groups. This screening device is a useful early intervention tool, one which nonetheless is not in widespread use.

Another powerful predictor of delinquency is homework trouble. Students who refuse to complete or who are reticent about homework, even in the early grades, are often candidates for delinquency.

You have to evaluate

A crucial component of any violence prevention program is evaluation, a process of identifying the elements of a program that are effective, and those that are not. Valid evaluation relies on statistical data to signal effective and ineffective practices. However, many states forego evaluation, along with other prevention and early intervention practices, because they are under pressure to expend their resources in the prosecution of violent and criminal individuals.

"Arrest data for juveniles is no longer reliable in the state of California," Reid reported, "because, as with everything else, they're putting all their money into services, and they're not keeping very good data anymore on their juvenile or adult corrections. One of the things I really advise you to do, if you want to help people develop violence prevention programs, is try and convince states to get some kind of database started, so they can find out, five years after they start an intervention, whether it has any effect."

"Adults need to pass on a culture. We often have too much faith in children's ability to lead one another. We need to enlarge community participation in schools. We need to integrate community services with schools, and turn many segments of the population into stakeholders. We need to get parents involved in their children's education."

Getting parents involved

Reid concluded by once again advising RRC personnel to consider all the elements of a youngster's environment when RRCs work with states to devise violence prevention strategies. He stressed that RRCs and states should involve parents as supervisors and mentors for their youngsters. "Adults need to pass on a culture," he said. "We often have too much faith in children's ability to lead one another. One thing we do know about what works and what doesn't work is, we really do need to have multimodal approaches. We need to enlarge community participation in schools. We need to integrate community services with schools, and turn many segments of the population into stakeholders. For example, discipline codes in schools should be endorsed by parents. We need to get parents involved in their children's education. Working on one dimension is not gonna cut it."

Johns Hopkins

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Dr. Werthamer-Larsson's Good Behavior Game was implemented during the 1993–94 school year, and ran the entire year. Targeting aggressive and withdrawn behaviors, the design encompassed a population of nine first grade classrooms, each of which was divided into three heterogeneous teams, for a total of 27 teams. The design established explicit rules about behavior, which were posted in the classroom and were read aloud to the class by the teacher every morning, before the game was played. The rules were always stated in a positive manner, beginning with phrases like "We will . . .," rather than using negative phrases that begin with "We will *not* . . . ." The rules were typical of first grade classrooms, along the lines of *We will sit quietly* and *We will pay attention*. To give students a sense of ownership of the rules, the students were responsible for constructing the signs that posted the rules.

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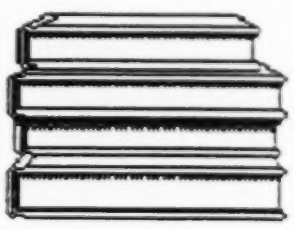

The "game" was an ongoing process that accompanied normal instructional time. The students went about their usual classroom routines, and as instructional time went on, if a student broke one of the posted rules, the teacher announced the fact aloud to the class in a normal speaking voice, and made a mark on the chalkboard under the student's team. When the teacher observed and recorded a misbehavior, she or he would alert the class to the misbehavior, making sure that the students understood the misbehavior and the meaning of the mark on the chalkboard. "John got out of his seat without permission," the teacher would say, and place a checkmark beside the team's name on the board. The game was played three times per week, and as the school year progressed, the length of the game was increased from 10 minutes to two hours. At the end of the game, all teams with four or less checkmarks 'won' the game. Teams were rewarded with reinforcers that were appealing to first graders but relevant to classroom learning.

"Not only was the teacher trying to promote good behavior, but *everybody* on the team was trying to promote good behavior," said Dr. Werthamer-Larsson. "They were helping one another out. There was a lot of peer support for positive behavior, rather than just the teacher being the sole agent for giving this message."

For the first six weeks of the game, tangible reinforcers were used to reward well-behaved teams, including pencils, rulers, erasers, and workbooks. Then, intangible reinforcers were used, so that children would not grow to believe they had to pay for good behavior, or that good behavior was a commodity. Intangible rewards included being allowed to read a poem over a microphone, or going over to the library to pick out a book to read. Gradually, all rewards were "faded" or reduced, then removed, and the team saw that most students maintained good behaviors even after the rewards were removed.

"It's imperative that we take a step back from programs and ask critically, Is this program helping with the children I'm working with? What's the evidence? You can't just say, Does this program work, yes or no—but, Who does it work for, and Who does it not work for? What more do we need to do?"

Thirty percent of the first grade students did not respond to the Good Behavior Game intervention in the Baltimore public schools. Dr. Werthamer-Larsson noted two characteristics that distinguished these non-responders: they had entered first grade with a history of fighting, or were repeating first grade.

She put the non-responders to good use. She used data about them to devise a developmentally-linked intervention to add to the classroom approach. "The link between non-response and repeating first grade suggests that we need to incorporate strategies that promote learning, and success in school," she said. "The link between non-response and fighting behavior suggests that we need to include strategies to promote good behavior."

She identified three types of components that are critically important to the success of developmental, classroom-based, violence prevention interventions: (1) curricular components, to develop reading and math skills, (2) behavioral components to promote positive behavior and develop social skills, and (3) special needs components, to reinforce these whole-class strategies. The details of these components are as follows:

Curricular components:

- Interactive read-aloud sessions to improve listening and comprehension skills.
- Dramatic work and journal writing to improve composition skills.
- Weekly critiques of classwork to improve critical thinking skills.
- A manipulative-based math program to improve mathematics skills.

Behavioral components:

- Behavioral strategies to reinforce positive behavior in the classroom.
- Weekly class meetings to promote group problem-solving skills.

Special needs components:

- Back-up and alternative curricular and behavioral strategies, specially designed to meet individual needs of non-responders.
- Individual tutoring.
- A continuum of individualized behavior management strategies.

Interventions that include these components have the best chance of success, she said.

Dr. Ialongo's Family-School Partnership Approach

Dr. Ialongo's intervention targeted parenting practices, and operated within the neighborhood, classroom, peer group, family, and other environments that were relevant to learning and behavior. His approach used three sets of simple but effective tools:

The first set of tools was a series of workshops, within which the researchers worked to achieve several goals:

- Share with parents the importance of reading aloud to their children, along with strategies to enhance the experience of reading aloud. These workshops, called *Read Aloud Workshops*, taught interactive reading strategies to parents, including strategies to relate the reading to personal experience, and to make predictions and ask questions about the reading based on personal experience.
- Provide parents with enjoyable activities they could undertake with their children to foster math skills in the children. Parents were educated about the benefits of using these hands-on activities to encourage their children to learn math skills. The activities were premised upon real-life experiences, were interactive in that they allowed input from the children, and emphasized the process of getting a correct answer rather than the answer itself. These *Fun Math Workshops* were designed to allow the parents to generalize the positive workshop experience to the home.
- Inform parents about effective ways to discipline their children and promote self-esteem in the children, including effective use of praise, and methods of avoiding and ignoring misbehavior and preventing behavior problems before they occur.

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These workshops were guided by a group leader who was part of the research team, occurred in small groups of no more than 12 parents, were never longer than 90 minutes in length, and used many different strategies to educate and involve parents, including:

- Presentations by the group leader.
- Modeling of skills by the group leader.
- Guided practice in interacting with other parents.
- Guided practice in interacting with their children.
- Group-led discussions of skills, integrating skills learned in class with personal situations at home and in school.
- Structured homework activities for parents, with which they could practice the skills they learned in the workshops.

The second set of tools included materials that helped parents and children work together to ensure the children's success in school, and a special communication system for parents and teachers:

- A parent lending library, containing books recommended to parents for reading aloud to their kids. Thirty two titles were selected for the library. Each book was imprinted with instructions for parents to make the most of the books with their kids, including methods of making the reading experience positive and constructive and fun, and methods for helping kids use the reading experience to develop language and memory skills.
- A fun math kit. Built on the idea that kids learn through experience, the kit introduced concrete concepts as a basis for learning abstract concepts. This kit gave parents a chance to see the actual math problems that kids would work with in school.
- A voice mail system. Each school installed a phone with a voice mail system, on which parents could leave messages pertaining to their kids. School principals allotted teachers half an hour each week to listen to the messages and call the parents back. The teachers could leave messages on the voice mail system for parents to hear. This system facilitated communication between parents and teachers, and was instrumental in involving parents in the intervention process.

The third set of tools was an inservice training program for first

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grade teachers and other school staff, implemented with several specific goals:

- Assist teachers in creating an environment that invites parent and staff involvement.
- Help teachers communicate more effectively with culturally diverse families.
- Help teachers identify classroom conditions that affect the development of their students, and teach practices that promote parent involvement in their children's education.
- Recommend appropriate techniques by which teachers can communicate with parents, and encourage teachers to communicate with parents—not just when negative situations arise at school, but when positive ones arise too.
- Identify ways to build trust and respect between families and teachers.
- Help teachers plan and execute successful parent-teacher conferences.

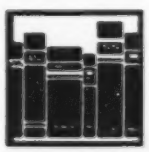
According to Dr. Ialongo, the intervention recognized parents as authorities in the bringing up of their children. "Rather than talking down to parents, a partnership of this sort encourages parents to bring to the workshop skills that they have found to be effective in helping their kids learn," he said.

"What does it take to get parents involved?" asked Dr. Ialongo. "We have to give the school system a model for involving parents. We tried to develop a model that would ensure maximum parent involvement." Dr. Ialongo found several successful stratagems to involve parents:

- Use personalized invitations to invite parents to meetings and workshops.
- Include a meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner—at introductory meetings.
- Provide child care during and transportation to meetings and workshops.
- Consult parents to establish dates and times for meetings and workshops.
- Offer meetings and workshops at convenient times so as to maximize participation.

Dr. Ialongo used a reward system to motivate the parents further. Parents who came regularly to meetings received small cash prizes. He also established a reward system for students whose parents came to meetings. "Kids can be very useful in getting their parents to participate," he said. Students who motivated their parents to participate in meetings and workshops received certificates of merit and small rewards such as teddy bears. All rewards were presented during brief ceremonies, so that parents and students would be publicly recognized for their efforts.

The most important element of Dr. Ialongo's effort to involve parents was the parent-school liaison. At each school, a critical person or group of persons, a "parent participation logistical support team," encouraged parents to participate. "Essentially, these were the people who got the parents to come in," said Dr. Ialongo. A parent-teacher liaison would call parents before and after meetings and workshops, reminding them to attend meetings, thanking them for attending, and serving as a personable, interested voice that parents could hear at the other end of the telephone line.



Dr. Ialongo concluded by reminding educators and policymakers: "If you're going to involve families in schools, it will take a lot of work and a lot of funding."

Assessing the results of the intervention

The Johns Hopkins team is currently evaluating the results of Dr. Werthamer-Larsson's classroom approach and Dr. Ialongo's parent-school partnership approach. Presently it is too early to definitively state the effects of either approach. Initial anecdotal reports from teachers, parents, and the students themselves indicate improvements in behavior and academic achievement among the students.

It is worthwhile to note the results of a classroom intervention conducted at an earlier time by the Johns Hopkins team. Recently, the team conducted follow-up research on a population of students who played the Good Behavior Game in first grade, in 1987, evaluating these students when they were in eighth grade. Evaluation data showed that, in this group of students, violent behavior was reduced from 24% to 12%. "Violent behavior" was construed as arson, possession of weapons, and physical attacks. "It's exciting to have that kind of reduction in violent behavior after using a very simple intervention program," said Dr. Werthamer-Larsson.

Zeller

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departments into a team to undertake a regional effort to approach the issue of SED. The states in the western region, with technical assistance from WRRC, have collaborated to form a regional project to address the matter of delivering effective interventions to SED students, and retaining trained SED teachers. The name of the regional project is *Organizing Social Systems to Support Competent Social Behavior in Children and Youth.* "This title is an accurate way to perceive the problem we face," said Zeller.

The task WRRC faced in organizing the regional team was not simply one of devising strategies to change SED behavior, but one of clearly defining competent social behavior, then building systems of support around that definition. "If we could establish that definition and those systems, that would be the beginning of dealing with the problem," Zeller said.

Zeller explained that defining the perceptions of states during this activity has been WRRC's primary role. "Our job as leaders is not just to respond to what the states say, but to reframe and make sense of it," he said. As RRCs render technical assistance to states, they need to respond to needs that states identify, and also to anticipate problems of which states are not yet aware. Successful technical assistance activities, Zeller said, have these elements in common:

- They respond to state-identified needs.
- They anticipate problems.
- They utilize all available research and data.
- They are practicable.
- They are specific to need.
- They are based on systems theory.

Overview of the "Social Systems Project"

WRRC staff began their work by identifying three primary roles for WRRC in delivering technical assistance to states to improve outcomes for SED students:

- Help states improve policy, programs, and practices.
- Supply states with materials to argue for changes in policy.
- Provide states with resources to develop practices and programs.

"We are trying to help state education departments make the point that change needs to occur."

Next, WRRC staff identified three "dimensions" which they had to consider when intervening with SED students:

- The differences in intervening with SED students of different ages and school levels.
- Prevention programs, including supervision of students. "Supervision is the single most powerful predictor of these kids getting into trouble."
- A diverse assortment of other methods and tools, including: teaching social skills; implementing individualized behavior programs based on assessment; and implementing management systems in schools, including school-wide discipline models and crisis management strategies. "We have to deal with this whole range of domains," said Zeller. "You can't pick up just one piece of these."

The short term, expected outcomes of the project included:

- Development of a document that would describe the beginning, process, and results of the project.
- Convening of a regional forum to discuss progress and identify next steps.
- Generating of interest among all the regional states in developing the project.

The long term goal of the project was to effect changes in policy and practices throughout the entire region. "We wanted to have an impact on policy, and help states promote program changes and improved practices," said Zeller.

To begin a regional discussion of the "Social Systems Project," WRRC sponsored a regional seminar in August 1994. WRRC staff assembled four volumes of information about strategies that schools can use to intervene with SED students, and shared these volumes with the western states. The volumes included information about prevention, model programs, services for schools, individual interventions, and teacher stress and burnout.

WRRC also developed a Presentation Guide for states, which state education departments could use to present state legislators with data and other information about SED, to assist legislators in setting informed policy. The Presentation Guide

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included sections on appropriate and inappropriate social behavior vis-á-vis cultural diversity, demographic information, legal information, prediction and prevention practices, evaluation practices, and interventions. "This Guide helps people who don't understand the nature of SED," said Zeller. "We are trying to help state education departments make the point that change needs to occur."

Evaluating the Project

It is too early to tell the effects, at the classroom level, of the "Social Systems Project." "This is not a finished project, it's work in progress," said Zeller, who then remarked on the complicated nature of the process of creating systemic change. "Bringing about change in systems and states is like moving a cemetery—it's a well-established community. There will be many barriers, and you won't get much help from the inside."

However, the regional effects of the project have been noticeable, and WRRC has put together information, expertise, and contacts with other resources specifically to help states work together to develop effective SED interventions. "We're ready," said Zeller. "If a state wants help in assembling a program quickly, we can help with that. We have many materials that we can put into pamphlet form so the states can disseminate them in local districts. We've invested time to develop these resources, because they're important to states."

Delaware

(from page 3)

emphasizes conflict resolution, for students, family members, and community agencies that work with students and families. , "Unless children see conflict resolution modeled by the adults in their community and school, they will not value or believe in it."

The design of the program

Woodruff described the logistical details of the alternative program.

- The state does not fund individual school districts to develop the alternative program, but rather entire counties, so that consistent guidelines have been established in all districts. "We would not have been able to put the personnel and services in place to do a good job," said Woodruff. "The approach would have been piecemeal at best."

- In each county, the program is governed by a consortium of school districts. In two of the counties, private contractors have implemented the program, while the public school system operates the program in the third county. The private contractors include a community college in one county, and a church group in another. The counties have implemented separate programs for junior high students and for high school students.
- Students of age 16 or younger who are expelled must be referred to the alternative program. Students who are considered a danger to themselves or to others may be referred to outside agencies. There are many agencies, said Woodruff, with which these students may be placed. Older students who have fallen far behind in school are often referred to outside agencies.
- The expelled student and the student's family receive counseling as a part of the alternative program. "We really emphasize changing the environment in which the student lives," said Woodruff. "It's important that the family understands the issues the student is going through."
- One component of the alternative program that is in place specifically to encourage participation by families and communities is the Site Based Governance Component, which allows parents to have input into the program. "Parents have a say in what the code of conduct is for kids. So, . they own it and buy into it. And so do the kids."
- When a student returns to regular education classes from the alternative program, the student often faces stigma associated with his previous actions. "Everyone knows what the student did and why he was expelled," said Woodruff. Often, the

student will be provoked back into delinquency by his peers, or will face prejudice from his peers and perhaps from his teachers. To mitigate the problem of returning to school in the face of stigma, students are often returned to different settings, with a new group of teachers and peers. "This gives the student a reasonable chance of making it," she said.

The design of an intervention should include not only the school environment but those of the community and the home, and should emphasize parent and family involvement. "Interventions should go beyond school walls," Woodruff said. "It's very hard to get out of our home, our office, our own building, and go out into the community and interact with other agencies. When we have done that we have been very successful. We have seen some wonderful results from programs that include communities and families."

Providing leadership

States need to give leadership to their school districts by establishing effective programs for districts to adopt or emulate. "In Delaware we have tried to provide a framework for districts to implement programs," said Woodruff. "Schools need to design, understand, and own programs, otherwise the programs will not work."

Procuring funds for programs

If state legislators are going to fund alternative school programs, they should provide adequate funds, said Woodruff. During fiscal year 1994 the Delaware legislature funded many school districts with as little as $12,000 to initiate programs. "In this day and age, that doesn't go very far," she said. "Districts can do very little with that." However, she lauded districts for seeking funds from sources other than the state. "To their credit, districts have worked with their communities, and with other agencies, to get more funding. Some have procured local foundation grants."

"I have impatience with people who want to fix kids without considering how we as adults have contributed to the environment in which kids live. Public school students live with us (educators, parents) for significant parts of their day. When we deal with disruptive behaviors, we should consider not only what children bring with them into the classroom, but also what we bring with us. We have to start thinking differently about who kids relate to."

Vital components: prevention, evaluation

Woodruff noted with chagrin that the prevention component of the alternative program was funded with only $375,000. "Prevention and early intervention programs cannot be left out," she said. "We are seeing younger and younger children bringing significant problems to school. State legislators need to direct funds to prevention and early intervention programs."

To help procure funds from the state legislature, the Delaware Department of Public Instruction rewrote the guidelines for the alternative program so that the program was called a "school-linked, community-based" program. The program now would serve grades K–6, and would send a Request For Proposal (RFP) to school districts stipulating a need to prevent discipline problems and reduce the risk of academic failure. This move was intended to convince Delaware legislators to fund the prevention element of the alternative program. "We really believe prevention will make a difference," said Woodruff. "Research tells us it will make a difference."

Evaluating the results of the alternative program has been difficult, because the Delaware legislature did not fund an evaluation component for the program. During her presentation, Woodruff expressed frustration at this. The Delaware Department of Public Instruction has "only some data, and a lot of anecdotal information about the differences we're making for children," with which to evaluate the results of the alternative program. "Except for the families who have come back to us and said, *This is making a difference for my family*, we don't have much to go on." However, said Woodruff, based on anecdotal evidence, the alternative program is improving outcomes for a population in which, traditionally, interventions have been difficult.

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The need to work together

"It really does take a whole village to raise a child," said Woodruff. "Unless schools, communities, and parents work together, we're not going to improve outcomes. We have to stop thinking we have all the answers. We have to stop closing our doors, and invite agencies and parents to help."

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The agencies with which the Delaware Department of Public Instruction works to design and implement the alternative program include the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Families; the Department of Family Services for Child Abuse; and the Department of Public Instruction. Woodruff encouraged other state education departments to forge bonds with different agencies in their states. "We've learned a lot from these agencies. They have given us insights about the populations we're trying to serve that we never would have thought of. We used their expertise in designing the alternative program."

The Delaware Department of Public Instruction wrote the RFP for the alternative schools program specifically to encourage collaboration with outside agencies. The RFP not only advertised the requirements of the alternative program, but went one step further: the Department made a commitment of resources to the agencies who were awarded the RFP. These commitments included free training, use of telephone and fax lines, working space, and other valuable resources. "Writing the RFP this way, and committing our own resources rather than standing back and letting the outside agencies handle it, helped us establish a good working relationship with the agencies to whom we finally awarded the RFP," said Woodruff.

What the Regional Resource Centers can do

Woodruff ended her talk by briefly telling the Regional Resource Centers about the kinds of assistance that state departments of education need:

- "Keep us informed about best practices."
- "Help us write advocacy papers and position papers, so we can inform legislators about the need for programs and the advisability of practices."
- "Pay attention to research on violence prevention. Help us inform people about the importance of prevention."

She ended by thanking her Regional Resource Center, and recognizing other RRCs in general for the assistance they give to state education departments.

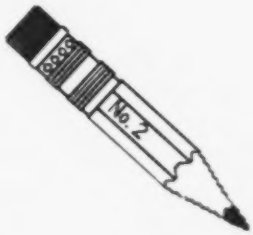
A few facts about antisocial behavior

- **The vast majority of antisocial children are boys. Antisocial behavior in girls, when it occurs, is often self-directed rather than outer-directed.**
- **There are two types of antisocial behavior: overt and covert. The overt type involves acts against people; the covert, acts against property, or self-abuse. By adolescence, many at-risk children manifest both types, increasing their risk status substantially.**
- **Antisocial behavior that develops early in a child's school career is the single best predictor of delinquency in adolescence.**
- **Three years after leaving school, 70% of antisocial youth have been arrested at least once.**
- **Antisocial children can be identified, with great accuracy, as early as ages three or four.**
- **If antisocial behavior is not changed by the end of grade three, it should be treated as a chronic condition. At this point, antisocial behavior cannot be cured, and can only be managed with lifelong intervention.**
- **Early intervention in homes, schools, and communities is the single best method of diverting children from antisocial behavior.**
- **Children who grow up antisocial are at severe risk for a host of long term, negative developmental outcomes, including dropping out of school, vocational adjustment problems, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship problems, and higher hospital and mortality rates.**

—Source: WRRC, quoting researcher/author Hill M. Walker

Violence "number one" concern of state directors

The problem that most concerns state directors of special education today is that presented by increasing numbers of violent students in public schools, according to the National Information Action Center (NIAC), an information clearinghouse operated by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).



In spring of 1993, the NIAC asked state directors to articulate the information they most required when they worked with state legislators, school boards, and other organizations. The NIAC received about 100 responses from state directors across the nation, indicating information needs in areas such as assistive technology, finance, and outcomes. To prioritize these information needs, the NIAC sent a survey to state directors, asking them to rank, on a scale of one to four, the likelihood of their needing the information within the next two years, and the impact that receiving the information would have on their staff performance. By fall 1993, NASDSE personnel had analyzed the results of this survey. "The number one need, by far, was information on how to provide services that will handle increased numbers of violent students," said Joan Nelson of NASDSE. "Violent students were clearly the most pressing issue."

Responding to state directors' needs for information on how states are providing appropriate services for the increasing number of students who exhibit violent and aggressive behavior, NASDSE personnel make it their business to gather information about conferences, publications, and organizations that deal in violence prevention and intervention. "We try to disseminate information about research and best practices," said Ms. Nelson. "The idea is to be of assistance to state directors and others."

Ms. Nelson pointed out that the NIAC is not devoted solely to providing information about issues concerning violence, but supplies information to state directors about a variety of topics. "The NIAC is a source of information about critical need areas," she said.

"These aren't some teenybopper parents having kids who are out of control. These are nice taxpaying fifty-year-olds . . ."

Workgroup discusses ways to evaluate technical assistance activities, communicate with states, mobilize constituents, request funding, build network

After hearing the presentations of Reid, Werthamer-Larsson, Ialongo, and Woodruff, the Workgroup broke into small discussion groups and generated a list of five key questions with which they, as providers of technical assistance to state education departments, should assess their technical assistance activities, especially violence intervention and prevention activities. These are questions with which RRCs should evaluate their relationships with state education departments as the two parties work together to approach the issue of violence prevention:

1. Who drives change within a state?

2. When are states most likely to act on the issue of violence prevention?

3. What strategies do we know states are ready to act on? Or, what strategies should we offer to states?

4. How do we help states to implement strategic change to promote safe schools?

5. In what manner are we most likely to effect statewide change in violence prevention practices?

After discussing these questions, the groups reconvened in the larger group and reported their results, then discussed them with Reid and Woodruff, both of whom shared their views with the RRCs.

Reid advised the RRCs to assemble a group of advocates by tapping into each state's older population. "Get the older population involved. That's what I see lacking now. There are a lot of grandparents who occupy parenting roles, who can be an effective lobbying force. These

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aren't some teenybopper parents having kids who are out of control. These are nice taxpaying fifty year-olds taking care of their teenyboppers' kids. Get these people out to the legislature. They really make a difference."

Woodruff told the RRCs to expand the range of needs identified in funding requests. "It's important to use funds in a good way—seek broad parameters for funding, so you can apply for funds as needed." Woodruff related how she and her staff sat around a table discussing how they could get the Delaware legislature to allow the broadest possible use of funds. She warned against presenting state legislatures with a narrow range of uses for funds. "We tried to convince them to let us have just a framework around which to implement a program," she said.

During the discussion, an RRC staff person commented on creating change within a state. "Does the superintendent drive change?" she asked. "Does the schoolboard? My group realized that a partnership of two or three of these top level people is what really drives change." She went on, "Partnership needs to be a core element of whatever strategy we put into action. It's going to take a partnership of superintendents, school boards, and the higher level administrators in a district to actually make change happen."

Someone else remarked on the influence of the media in creating change. "The media tends to sensationalize issues, and that will drive agendas," she said. "There are a lot of conservative groups that are very well organized at the local level, and it's their agenda that gets considered first. The media helps these groups publicize their agenda." This person also noted that legislators often ignore unpublicized issues, but will dwell at length upon issues that have been reported in the media. "We've identified that they (legislators) pass high visibility bills that get a lot of press, things like trying kids as adults, and the 'three strikes and you're out' bill."

This same person noted that many state laws passed recently have not considered the relevance of prevention and early intervention, but have instead implemented punitive or restrictive measures. "Everything is being done around controlling issues, around removal issues, rather than more positive prevention/intervention initiatives."

Another person brought up the matter of how RRCs can assist state education departments with optimal efficiency, and listed a string of suggestions. "What can we do to assist the states that don't have the time, staff, or expertise to solve problems? We could convene multiagency groups for dialogues and problem solving. We could examine their data collection system and make recommendations to improve it. We could help with packaging data as information that policymakers, professionals, and the public can use. We can help states put arguments in an effective format to propose programs to legislators."

At the end of the day's discussion, Reid advised the RRCs to develop a strong network with agencies outside the RRCs. He suggested specific agencies with which the RRCs could form productive relationships:

- The National Institute of Mental Health, which has a prevention and research branch. "Right now, violence prevention is a very hot issue at NIMH," said Reid.
- The Center for Disease Control, which has been "extraordinarily active lately in sponsoring research and commissioning papers relevant to violence prevention."
- The National Institute of Health, which has an office that is working to coordinate projects to address violence prevention.

Questions to Ask About Change Strategies . . .

1. Who drives change within a state?

2. When are states most likely to act on the issue of violence prevention?

3. What strategies do we know states are ready to act on? Or, what strategies should we offer to states?

4. How do we help states to implement strategic change to promote safe schools?

5. In what manner are we most likely to effect statewide change in violence prevention practices?

RRCs plan collaborative national violence prevention TA activity; to involve local, state, national education systems

RRFC, others developing multiregional effort, based on organizing systems

The RRCs, with assistance from NEC*TAS and the FRC, are developing a technical assistance activity to approach violence prevention on a national scale. According to Shirley Coale, a specialist at WRRC and the principal organizer of the multiregional TAA, violence among America's youth is a growing problem, and schools and communities are expanding violence prevention efforts. However, local, state, and national systems have yet to collaborate on a violence prevention effort. "To be effective, violence prevention efforts at each level need to be collaborative and comprehensive in scope, and focus on early childhood," said Coale. "Therefore, we need to develop a collaborative national approach to organizing systems to support competent social behavior in young children."

The multiregional TAA is still in the initial planning stages. However, planners have developed several goals for the TAA:

- Investigate the status of violence prevention efforts in states and agencies, including non-special-education agencies, and promote common recognition of the importance of violence prevention.
- Assemble a package of information about violence prevention for RRCs to send to states and agencies.
- Plan and convene a national forum to create a common idea of and goals for violence prevention efforts among children of ages birth to eight.

Considerable pretext exists for a multiregional, violence prevention TAA. "Often, states ask WRRC for information about and assistance with adjudicated youth, youth with SED (severe emotional disturbance) or BD (behavior disorder), and other crisis situations," said Coale. "But research and experience tell us that at the crisis point, there's not much anyone can do. It does make a difference to intervene at a young age."

Coale went on, "States are operating in a reactionary mode to increased referrals of SED/BD students. States are passing harsh legislation to deal with a growing problem of youth violence. More offenders are being incarcerated at a younger age. With tightening resources and increasing public outcry to halt violence, less resources are being reserved for prevention. Also, many legislators do not recognize the value of prevention."

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The innovative element of this TAA, said Coale, is that the planners will actively seek to involve agencies outside special education, in addition to special education agencies. "We're trying to take violence prevention out of the realm of special education," said Coale.

Just a few of the organizations, from both the special and the regular education fields, and from other fields, who will be invited to participate in the TAA include the Federation for Families, the Technical Assistance for Parents Project (TAPP), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the National Chamber of Commerce, the HeadStart program, the American Medical Association (AMA), the National Association for State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

The planners will invite participation from many other organizations as well. "We can't be effective working just with educators," said Coale. "We must promote community and multi-

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organizational involvement. We have to consider local pilot programs, existing state policies, and the need for team planning. We need to bring state educational agencies on board so that we all feel we are responding to a commonly felt need."

Coale stressed that all organizations who become involved in the TAA will have input into its design and its effect within their immediate regions and upon the populations they serve. "In order for this to work," she said, "it has to be owned by the people who will carry it forward."

Some facts about Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED)

- SED is predicted by these personal characteristics in students: inconsistent supervision by parents; consistent antisocial behavior; low socioeconomic status; racial minority status; lack of proficiency in basic academic skills; membership in a deviant peer group; a progression from low-intensity to high-intensity problem behaviors.
- Students who exhibit antisocial behavior, especially before age eight, are at the highest risk of developing SED.
- Students with SED can be identified prior to age eight; currently, however, less than half of SED students are identified by this age.
- The juvenile justice system, child welfare services, mental health services, and social services serve essentially the same populations, including SED students.
- Students labeled with SED have the poorest school outcomes of all students with disabilities, including the lowest school achievement and graduation rates, and the highest absenteeism, drop-out, and arrest rates.
- High school students with SED have a national GPA of 1.7, compared to 2.0 for all students with disabilities, and 2.6 for all students. Forty-four percent of SED students fail at least one course per year; 63% fail some part of their required minimum competency tests.
- Only 42% of students with SED graduate from high school, compared to 57% for students with disabilities, and 76% for all students.
- Students with SED miss more days of school per year than students in any other disability category.
- Fifty-five percent of students with SED drop out of high school, compared to 36% of all students with disabilities, and 24% of all students.
- Twenty percent of SED students are arrested at least once before they leave school. Seventy-four percent of SED students who drop out of high school are arrested within five years.
- Anglo-American and African-American students have the highest rates of SED identification; Hispanic-Americans and Asian-Americans, the lowest.
- Between two-thirds and three-quarters of students identified with SED are male.
- Students from households with annual incomes of less than $25,000 have the highest rates of SED identification.

(Facts taken from materials supplied by WRRC.)

In brief: some of the components of successful violence prevention methods

Severe Emotional Disturbance, antisocial behavior, juvenile delinquency, and conduct disorder (CD) often involve violent and aggressive behaviors of varying intensity and frequency. These behaviors generally cause consternation among families, schools, and communities, and are frequently a topic of legislative debate. Researchers know more about these "violent" problems and disorders than about any other kind of behavioral problems that affect children and youth. We have seen that prevention and early intervention are the best solutions for the problems and disorders that result in violent behavior in young people. Below, note some of the components of successful prevention strategies (*as adapted from materials supplied by WRRC, 1994*).

Prevention strategies

- Establish early intervention services that reach students at a very young age. Early interventions are far more cost-effective than later interventions—such as incarceration.
- Develop proactive family support systems, including training in parenting skills, prenatal care, and home management; employment support; and substance abuse counseling.
- Develop proactive community support systems, such as supervised care and recreational programs for youngsters during non-school hours; develop systems to strengthen community organizations and to revitalize the economy of low-income areas.
- Develop proactive school support strategies, such as a school-wide discipline plan, a social skills curriculum, and an education program to teach young students about the realities of substance use and firearms.
- Set up systems to ensure academic competence, especially prior to age eight. Academic competence bolsters self-esteem and mitigates many of the problems associated with SED, CD, and other behavioral disorders.
- Establish full-service schools that sponsor programs for bodily and mental health; offer social services; and facilitate the juvenile justice process.
- Add social skills instruction to a school's curriculum. Use techniques of academic instruction, teacher coaching and modeling, role playing, and positive reinforcement to teach social skills.
- Shift the focus of local, state, and federal policies from reactive, punitive, and exclusionary to proactive, positive, and instructional.

Federal Resource Center for Special Education

The Federal Resource Center for Special Education
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW Suite 900
Washington DC 20009
Facsimile: 202-884-8443 ○ Internet: eboarland@aed.org

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Violence prevention: a selective bibliography

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This is a very limited selection of the large number of materials on violence prevention that currently are extant. This selection was supplied by the Western Regional Resource Center.